

By MIKE WHITESMAN: Wycombe W. 5, Kettering T. 0

WYCOMBE WANDERERS blitzed bewildered Kettering Town with five goals in 25 minutes before the interval at Loakes Park to reach the F.A. Cup big-time.

Prompted magnificently by Blues skipper, John Delaney, Saturday's 4th and final qualifying round triumph obliterated any thoughts the Southern Leaguers may have harboured of repeating their 1968 dash to the third round proper.

But it opened up all sorts of wondrous possibilities for Wycombe. They moved in

among the third and fourth division "names" pulled from the bag at Lancaster Gate on Monday, by hypnotising their opponents with a brand of football promising to emulate Sutton United's glory run of last season.

For 45 minutes they were so dazzling, so commanding, so purposeful, that the sheer anticlimax of a mundane second half was unanimously pardoned by a crowd of somewhere around the 6,000 mark.

The contrast between play before and after the turnaround is plainly illustrated by figures. Of Wycombe's 30 shots, both on and off goal, 23 were made in the first half.

But Kettering, nicknamed the Poppies, can take some of the

credit. Already five goals down, they bravely turned in an improved performance, which coupled with Wycombe's more relaxed approach, stopped any repetition of the earlier goal feast.

Yet never did it look like becoming truly Poppy Day, as Wycombe claimed their sixth runaway win over a part-time professional outfit from the Southern League.

That Wycombe manager, Brian Lee rated Kettering as "certainly the best Southern League opposition that we have faced this season" in his programme notes, only emphasises why Wanderers need feel no trepidation against the vast majority of clubs from this competition.

Wycombe's "kop" was put straight into a jubilant frame of mind by the loudspeaker announcement placing Ted Powell in the number four shirt, and confirming he had won his fight for fitness.

Even late the previous week, it had seemed he was a doubtful starter. But Ted fully earned the roar that greeted the news, covering superbly for Delaney while his international partner ventured forward.

With Keith Blunt and Paul Fuschillo so dependable at full-back — Iain MacLean stood watching from the touchline — Kevin O'Brien's major problem was boredom. Nevertheless he stayed alert for the few occasions Kettering brought him into play.

Les Hartridge cemented his comeback at the expense of substitute Barry Baker, while Larry Pritchard and Tony Horseman stood out in attack.

Pin-point man-to-man interpassing and running on and off the ball, confused Kettering's tough-tackling backrow. But it wasn't until the 17th minute, and Johnny Hutchinson's opening shot that 'keeper Paul Haynes first figured in the game.

Four minutes later Wanderers got the breakthrough they needed. Ironically it was Kettering's player-manager, former Welsh Under 23 star, Steve Gammon who gave them their chance, handling in the area to intercept a cross from Hutchinson from the right wing. Delaney, as ever, accepted the penalty, sidefooting his spotkick to the left while Haynes flung himself the wrong way.

Horseman, wearing the number eight shirt and looking all the better for this little piece of psychology, zipped in to make it 2-0 with one of the best goals of the afternoon. After 28 minutes, he took up possession just outside Town's box, dummed his way round Roger Ashby and carried on running

the chase, to elude the visiting defence with a punishing shot for the fourth goal.

Bremer, possessing the largest boot since Mother Hubbard, was for the most part well off target with a succession of half-aimed efforts. But three minutes later he sent the ball goalwards round the blind side of Kettering's defensive cover, his shot scraping inches wide of a post.

Finding small room in which to make progress on the wing, neither Harry Walden — Kettering's matchwinner in the 1-0 victory over Wycombe when they last met in the Cup ten seasons ago — nor John Lawman could free themselves.

Newly-signed centre-forward from Northampton, Barry



"How about that then?" gestures Wycombe skipper John Delaney, as he heralds goal number three. Joining in the congratulations is Tony Horseman, who shared four goals with the Wycombe skipper.

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The 'keeper stood even less chance of preventing number three, six minutes later, when from a Bernie Bremer free kick, Horseman deflected the ball to Delaney and the lanky defender power-headed into goal from inside the area — possibly a goal even overshadowing the second, and one Wanderers have practised in training all term.

Saturday saw it work for the first time.

Kettering had not conceded more than four goals in a match this season. But Wycombe equalled that record in the 36th minute, when Bremer rammed the ball forward off his head and Horseman took it

Shelswell, looked a lonely figure while play centred mainly inside the Kettering territory.

The visitors were already reduced to seeking out some consolation as Lawman curled an attempt into the near corner only for O'Brien to make a late save, palming the danger round for a corner.

Keith Searle, again generally over quiet, took Wanderers past Kettering's previous four goal maximum before the interval, with a dashing 44th minute score booted in on the run, Haynes only partly stopping the angled shot.

Kettering never knew what hit them and were still flinching under near fatal blows by Pritchard, Searle and Hutchinson in injury time, when

referee Bartlett took pity on the drooping Poppies by whistling for half time.

Wanderers were worth every decibel of applause as they went into the players' tunnel to a great ovation. But, with all incentive gone, the second half predictably fizzled out into a 45 minute anti-climax, in which a Kettering goal looked as likely as anything.

A rare flashback to earlier thrills began by Pritchard, developed into a fruitless scramble ten yards out from the Town's goalline in the 63rd minute.

Substitute Webster, taking over when centre-half Mick Reed was carried off with a right leg injury ten minutes from time, entangled himself in

Wanderers' offside snare three times in the closing stages.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: K. O'Brien; K. Blunt, P. Fuschillo, E. Powell, J. Delaney, L. Hartridge, L. Pritchard, A. Horseman, K. Searle, B. Bremer, J. Hutchinson. Sub: B. Baker (not used).

KETTERING TOWN: P. Haynes; T. Peck, R. Ashby, S. Gammon, M. Reed, (Sub: Webster 80th min.), M. Addy, H. Walden, K. Gully, P. Shelswell, M. Goodall, J. Lawman. Referee: R. W. Bartlett (Banbury).

Half-time: 5-0. Goalscorers: Wycombe—Delaney 2 (21 pen., 34), Horseman (28, 36), Searle (44). Attendance: Approx. 6,000.

MATCH DETAILS (Wycombe figures first)

First half: Shots (and headers) on goal 11-3, off goal 12-1, fouls (and handballs) 5-12, corners 5-0, off-sides 1-2.

Second-half: Shots (and headers) on goal 2-0, off goal 5-2, fouls (and handballs) 3-5, corners 4-4, off-sides 0-4.

Total: Shots (and headers) on goal 13-3, off goal 17-3, fouls (and handballs) 8-17, corners 9-4, off-sides 1-6.